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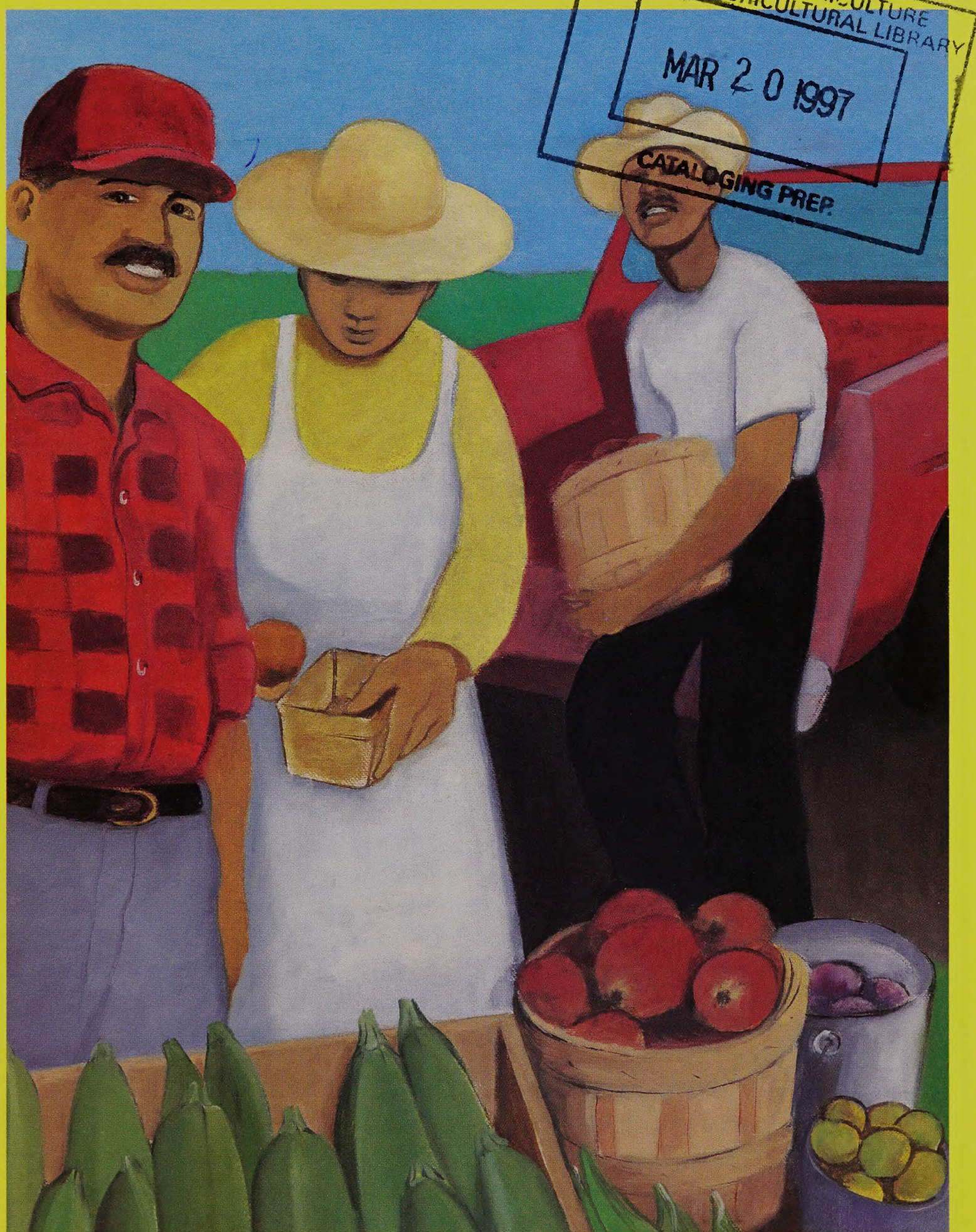
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Getting Help

FOR YOUR SMALL FARM

from USDA



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U. S. Department of Agriculture
Office of Civil Rights Enforcement

Introduction

This brochure provides information to small or limited resource farmers/ranchers and their advocates on some of the services available from USDA agencies. These services are provided by the Farm Service Agency; Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service; Natural Resources Conservation Service; Forest Service; Food and Consumer Service; and Agricultural Research Service. This brochure gives readily accessible information on available services by highlighting pertinent information on each program.

The Agricultural Credit Act of 1987 (HR 3030) requires USDA to assist small or limited resource farmers/ranchers (SLRF/R) and their advocates. The SLRF/R Initiative is undertaken in USDA's Office of Civil Rights Enforcement (OCRE). David Montoya is the Director of this agency.

Inquiries may be sent to:

Charles L. Whitaker

SLRF/R Initiative Outreach Program Manager

Office of Civil Rights Enforcement

U.S. Department of Agriculture

Room 326-W, Administration Building, 14th and Independence Avenue, S.W.

Washington, D.C. 20250

Telephone: 1-800-245-6340 • (202) 720-6078

Farm Service Agency (FSA)

PAYMENTS FOR YOUR CROPS

FSA is responsible for managing a wide variety of farm commodity, crop insurance, farm credit, and conservation programs for farmers through a network of State and county offices. FSA programs are directed primarily at agricultural producers or, in the case of loans, at those with farming experience. Three- to five-person county committees, elected by local farmers, play an important role in carrying out programs at the county level.

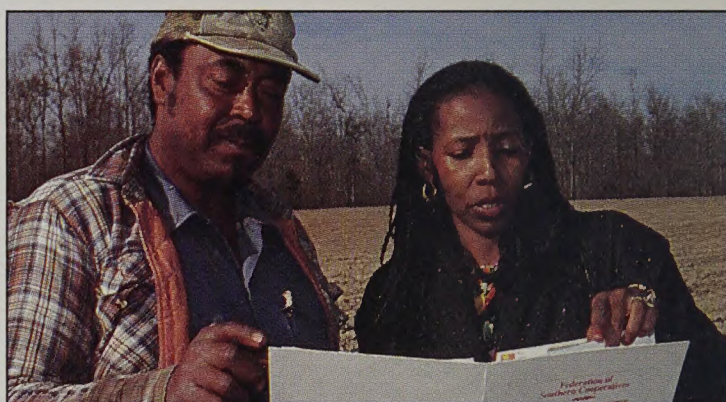
ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Payments are available to guarantee eligible producers an established crop price. Eligibility is achieved through two links—participation in an annual acreage reduction program and signing up for the basic “catastrophic” level of Federal crop insurance coverage. Producers participating can also qualify for loans after harvest, using produced commodities as collateral.

An owner, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper on a farm where the commodity is planted who meets program requirements is eligible to apply for payments and loans.

Federal crop insurance covers production losses due to unavoidable causes. Crop insurance to provide catastrophic yield protection to all producers of insurable crops is available in local FSA offices for a nominal processing fee. Small farmers who produce specialty crops which are currently not insurable may be eligible for benefits under the Noninsured Assistance Program, which is provided free of charge. To be eligible for this coverage, the overall area has to suffer yield losses. Producers must report acres and production to be eligible for protection.

Cost-sharing assistance is available to help farmers establish conservation measures to preserve and improve America's farmland. FSA conservation programs are directed toward solving critical soil, water, water quality, energy conservation, woodland, and pollution abatement needs on farms and ranches. An owner, landlord, tenant, or sharecropper on a farm or ranch, or an associated group bearing a part of the cost of an approved conservation practice is eligible to apply for cost-sharing assistance.



GETTING CREDIT/FINANCIAL HELP FOR SMALL FARMS

FSA provides financial assistance to help family farmers who are temporarily unable to obtain private, commercial credit. In many cases these individuals are beginning farmers who have insufficient net worth to qualify for commercial credit. In other instances, these are farmers who have suffered financial setbacks from natural disasters, or who have limited resources for establishing and maintaining profitable farming operations.

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

The FSA farm ownership loans are available to those who wish to buy, improve, or enlarge family farms. Uses may include construction, improvement, or repair of farmstead home and service buildings; improvement of on-farm water supplies; installation of pollution control or energy conservation measures; refinancing debts; clearing or improving farmland; and establishing nonagricultural enterprises that help farmers supplement their farm income. Operating loans are available to pay for items needed for farm operations, including livestock, poultry, farm and home equipment, feed, seed, fertilizer, fuel, chemicals, hail and other crop insurance, family living expenses, minor building improvements, water system development, hired labor, and pollution abatement.

Applicants must meet several eligibility requirements. For more information on these or other programs, contact the local FSA office, generally found in a county seat or the county agricultural commercial center and listed in telephone directories under "U.S. Department of Agriculture."

SMALL FARMER/RANCHER OUTREACH TRAINING AND TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

FSA provides and administers outreach and technical assistance grants for economically and/or socially disadvantaged farmers/ranchers. Outreach to small or limited resource farmers/ranchers increases their awareness of USDA programs and benefits.

The overall goal of the program is to increase the number of small and minority farmers/ranchers and directly improve their income through better management and financial analysis. The program enhances the commercial viability of these farmers and helps alleviate some of the problems confronting them as FSA farm credit borrowers with farm ownership and farm operating loans. Grants and agreements are established with 1890 land-grant colleges and universities, American Indian community colleges, Hispanic-serving institutions, and community-based organizations to provide training and technical assistance. These groups offer technical assistance based on scientific farm management practices and profitable alternative farming enterprises.

The FSA contact is Ted Patterson, and his telephone number is (202) 720-5050. The FSA contact for small farmer/rancher outreach training and technical assistance is John I. Just-Buddy. His telephone number is (202) 690-1890/1636.

Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS)

APHIS provides leadership in ensuring the health and care of animals and plants. The mission of APHIS is to protect the health of the Nation's livestock and poultry and the country's agricultural resources from harmful pests. It also protects livestock, field crops, and aquaculture (fish production) from depredation by predatory animals, birds, and field rodents.



APHIS provides farmers with technical assistance in pest/disease plant management, ecology, environmental stewardship, and other farm issues. Through its swine health protection program, APHIS helps to control erosion and animal waste contamination of waterways. The agency collaborates with many public organizations to enhance water quality.

The APHIS contact is Mary Harris Freeman, and her telephone number is (202) 720-6318, FAX (202) 720-2365

Agricultural Research Service (ARS)

ARS provides support through its South Central Family Farm Research Center at Booneville, Arkansas. Here research is conducted and advice is given on means to increase productivity and reduce inputs and costs of production in agroforestry (combining tree and forage production with ruminant livestock), livestock production, sustainable grazing systems, and other areas. Assistance is available in each of these areas. ARS has initiated an aquacultural Center of Excellence, oriented towards catfish farming, with the University of Arkansas-Pine Bluff. With Tennessee State University at McMinnville, ARS has initiated a Center of Excellence for horticulture, with emphasis on the production of dogwoods and other trees. ARS has also proposed a cooperative program on feeder pigs with Alcorn State University in Mississippi. All three programs emphasize small farms.

The ARS contact is Mike Brown, and his telephone number is (501) 675-3834.

Forest Service (FS)



FS and State foresters provide assistance through the Forest Stewardship and Stewardship Incentive Programs. The Forest Stewardship Program (FSP) provides farmers with technical assistance to develop a landowner stewardship plan for all of their forest resources (timber, wildlife, fish, recreation, wetlands, etc.). The Stewardship Incentive Program (SIP) provides up to 75 percent Federal cost-sharing to get stewardship practices installed.

For additional information contact your State forester. Information can also be obtained from the Forest Service, Natural Resources Conservation Service, and Farm Service Agency, listed in telephone directories under "U. S. Department of Agriculture."

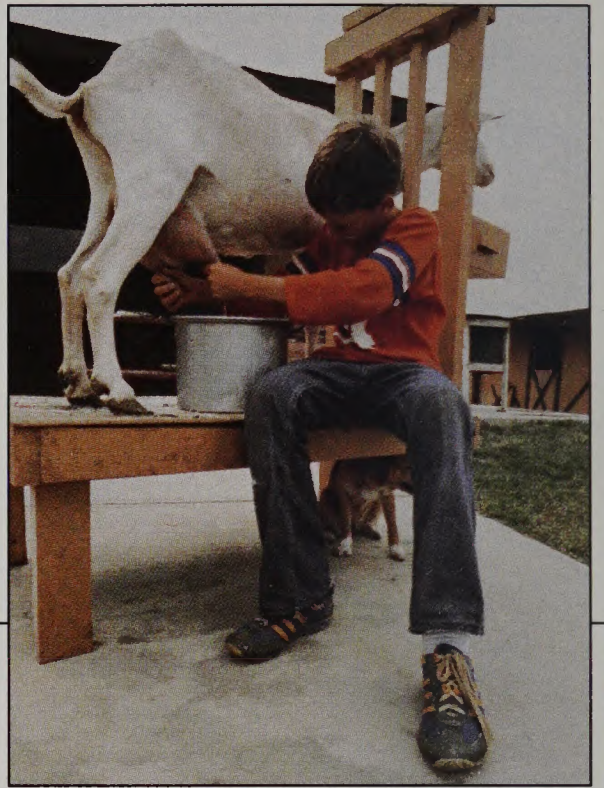
Food and Consumer Service (FCS)

FCS works with small or limited resource farmers/ranchers through the food assistance programs. Under the Special Supplemental Program for Women, Infants, and Children (WIC) and the Farmers Market Nutrition Program (FMNP), mothers participating in WIC receive funds to buy produce from local farmers markets. The farmers market program was begun to provide fresh, nutritious food from farmers markets to WIC participants and to expand their awareness and use of farm-grown products.

FCS is beginning an initiative to encourage small or limited resource farmers/ranchers to participate in the school meals procurement process.

The FCS contact for FMNP is Debbie Whitford at (703) 305-2734, and the FCS contact for school meals is Janet Hitchcock at (703) 305-2590.

Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service (CSREES)



ASSISTANCE FROM COLLEGES & UNIVERSITIES

CSREES, a national educational network, links research, science, and technology to the needs of people where they live and work. Extension's purpose is education—practical education for Americans to use in focusing on the critical issues that impact their daily lives and the Nation's future, including the following initiatives:

- Family and Economic Well-Being
- Improving Nutrition, Diet and Health
- Revitalizing Rural America
- Water Quality
- Youth at Risk

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Through grants made to land-grant institutions, State and county extension personnel provide educational and technical assistance to SLRF/R in the areas of agricultural production, home food production, new land-use ideas, diversion of farm resources from traditional to alternative crops, 4-H youth development and career guidance, retention of farmland by minorities, and production efficiency.

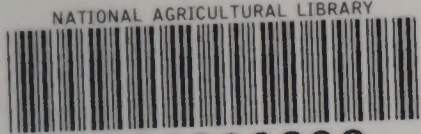
CSREES contact is Denis Ebodaghe and his telephone number is (202) 401-4385.

OFFICE FOR SMALL-SCALE AGRICULTURE (OSSA)

OSSA provides national leadership to respond to the needs of the small-scale farmer and participates, implements, or coordinates activities to enhance the national status of small-scale farmers. OSSA has several ongoing and planned initiatives:

- A quarterly newsletter entitled "A Small-Scale Agriculture Today" provides information specifically targeted to this population with a focus on relevant topics, technology, and calendar events.
- Factsheets — a series of one-page, two-sided information sheets, "A Small-Scale Agriculture Alternative," focus on enterprises with potential for the small-scale agricultural entrepreneur.
- "The Small-Scale Agriculture Directory" identifies over 500 Federal and State experts.
- A 9-minute color video, "The Perfect Tomato, The Ideal Blackberry: Making Money in Small-Scale Agriculture," promotes diversification.

For additional information contact Howard W. "Bud" Kerr, Jr., Director, Office for Small-Scale Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Cooperative State Research, Education, and Extension Service, Box 2244, Washington, D.C. 20250-2244. Telephone (202) 720-5245.



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Natural Resources Conservation Service (NRCS)



NRCS provides technical assistance to land users and communities to enable them to protect and conserve soil, water, and related natural resources. The agency works through nearly 3,000 local conservation districts. In an effort to improve services to small or limited resource farmers/ranchers, NRCS has an outreach program designed to increase and implement services to low-income and minority farmers as well as to American Indians. This effort will include opening a number of additional field offices on American Indian lands and working with other Federal agencies. The agency uses the 1890 land-grant institutions as a means of program delivery and technical assistance. NRCS is working with local soil and water conservation districts to assist communities in avoiding and correcting problems relating to potable running water, waste disposal, flooding, drainage, and other natural resource concerns of minority and poor citizens. NRCS maintains a Plant Materials Center at Booneville where plant material information and technical assistance is available for resource conservation.

ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Through local conservation districts, farmers can get assistance from NRCS in planning and applying conservation practices. These practices include conservation tillage, waterways, terraces, strip cropping, windbreaks, and irrigation water management. Soil surveys are available for most farms and ranches. NRCS personnel give information on the various kinds of soils on the farm and their proper management.

For more information contact your local NRCS office or call (202) 720-2847.

USDA PROGRAMS FOR AMERICAN INDIANS

Inquiries regarding services and programs for American Indians and Alaska Natives should be directed to the Office of Civil Rights Enforcement, American Indian Special Emphasis Program Manager, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or you may call (202) 720-0352.

The United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) prohibits discrimination in its programs on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, religion, age, disability, political beliefs and marital or familial status (Not all prohibited bases apply to all programs.) Persons with disabilities who require alternative means for communication of program information (braille, large print, audiotape etc.) should contact the USDA Office of Communications at (202) 720-2791.

To file a complaint, write the Secretary of Agriculture, U.S. Department of Agriculture, Washington, D.C. 20250, or call (202) 720-7327 (voice) or (202) 720-1127 (TDD). USDA is an equal employment opportunity employer.

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